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event. The phenomenon, however, has not been studied in detail as a relationship unto itself. Chaos Theory predicts that when circumstances are in a near chaotic state, the addition of another input, albeit however minor, can result in a major, wholly disproportionate output. The world and national situations in 1975 were uniquely unsettled and in some ways, unprecedented, when a small Cambodian force seized a U.S. merchant vessel, the Mayaguez. Instead of handling the matter purely as a routine diplomatic matter, the U.S. responded with a combat assault within hours of the seizure. The crew and ship were captured. This paper explores the possibility that the response was due to more than just the seizure. It suggests that the political, social, and economic events that preceded the seizure may have significantly contributed to a feeling of "crisis," and, in the jargon of Chaos Theory, became the "almost intransitive" event that precipitated the U.S. reaction.

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CHAOS THEORY THE THE MAYAGUEZ CRISIS

An Individual Study Project
Intended for Publication

by

Lieutenant Colonel Theodore H. Mueller

Dr. Michael I. Handel
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
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ABSTRACT

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The emerging science of Chaos may be applicable to sciences other than just those that are classical. Characterized by a non-linear notion that a small input can have a disproportionately large output, the phenomenon is referred to as the "butterfly" effect---the flapping of a butterfly's wings in Hong Kong might effect the weather in New York. The effects are often seen in many sciences to include political science. The military has as a corollary, the "for the loss of a nail" effect. This non-linear phenomenon has occurred often in history---wars have been started because of some otherwise insignificant event. The phenomenon, however, has not been studied in detail as a relationship unto itself. Chaos Theory predicts that when circumstances are in a near chaotic state, the addition of another input, albeit however minor, can result in a major, wholly disproportionate output. The world and national situations in 1975 were uniquely unsettled and in some ways, unprecedented, when a small Cambodian force seized a U.S. merchant vessel, the Mayaguez. Instead of handling the matter purely as a routine diplomatic matter, the U.S. responded with a combat assault within hours of the seizure. The crew and ship were recaptured. This paper explores the possibility that the response was due to more than just the seizure. It suggests that the political, social, and economic events that preceded the seizure may have significantly contributed to a feeling of "crisis", and, in the jargon of Chaos Theory, became the "almost intransitive" event that precipitated the U.S. reaction.



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INTRODUCTION

Time and circumstances can sometimes catapult the most unlikely event onto the world's center stage. The smallest event can erupt into an international crisis; a few have caused wars i.e., a pistol fired by Gavrilo Princip led to the outbreak of World War I. The emerging science of chaos refers to this phenomenon as the "butterfly effect"---the flapping of a butterfly's wings in Hong Kong might effect the weather in New York. Directly applicable to the physical sciences, the phenomenon might also apply to political science. Even in political science the effects of the phenomenon are not unknown. It has been characterized as the "loss of a nail effect"---for the want of a nail the shoe was lost, for the want of a shoe the horse was lost, etc. The results are experienced almost immediately---the causes evaluated mostly in hindsight.

The seizure of the U.S. merchant ship, Mayaguez, by Cambodian forces as the catalyst, the ensuing international intrigue that erupted as a byproduct, and the dramatic U.S. response that erupted as the result, may exemplify a political type of chaos [1].

The purpose of this paper is to review issues surrounding the Mayaguez seizure, relate the circumstances prompting these issues to the emerging science of chaos and to focus upon implications that might be applicable for the future.

THE CRISIS

Prior to the time of its seizure the Mayaguez was destined to be no more than a footnote in history as the world's first containerized cargo ship. During a few days in May 1975, the world's attention focused on it for a different reason; its name became banner headlines across the world. The aftermath resulted in the name Mayaguez earning a solid, albeit dubious, place in history, different from its previous status.

On May 12, 1975, Cambodian naval forces seized the U.S. merchant ship, Mayaguez. The reason for its seizure was not immediately known nor were explanations forthcoming from the Cambodian Government. Throughout the duration of the seizure, no direct contact was ever made between the governments of U.S. or Cambodia. U.S. officials, aware of the killing of millions of Cambodians by the newly placed government, feared for the safety of the crew. Comparisons were also made between it and the seizure of another U.S. ship, the Pueblo, in 1968. A variety of diplomatic actions were quickly initiated in an effort to secure the immediate

release of the ship and its 40 crew members. When diplomatic efforts failed, the United States initiated military action against Cambodia to secure the same end.

The military action was based on a hastily drawn plan developed from incomplete, inaccurate, and conflicting intelligence. The plan was further encumbered by time and availability of forces constraints. Regardless, it was approved with minor modification by the Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC) after it had also received scrutiny and ultimately the approval of the military and political leaders in Washington D.C. However, before the plan could be implemented, Cambodia announced through a commercial radio broadcast that the ship had been released. No specific mention of the crew was made in the broadcast. U.S. Government officials seized upon this lack of reference to the crew. President Ford used it as the sole justification for implementing the military plan against Cambodia; an assault that began less than 29 hours after the initiation of diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis. Prior to its implementation, U.S. authorities made no effort to rectify or clarify what may have been an oversight by the Cambodians in not mentioning the crew.

U.S. intelligence located at least part of the crew at Tang, an island about sixty miles off the Cambodian coast. One hundred seventy-five Marines aboard eight U.S. Air Force

helicopters assaulted the island on the morning of May 15th. The attacking force suffered heavy casualties almost immediately. At about the same time as the assault, and for reasons unrelated to it, all the Mayaguez crew members were released and a short time later are taken aboard the U.S.S. Wilson. In a classic intelligence miscue, the crew members were never on Tang island. The assault on the island was not necessary.

The crew was rescued from a Thai fishing boat at 10:00 a.m. on May 15, 1975. This equates to 11:00 p.m., May 14, 1975 Washington time. At 12:50 a.m. (Washington time) on May 15th, an hour and fifty minutes after the crew members were recovered, the Secretary of Defense ordered cessation of all offensive operations [2].

After the crisis it was discovered that the Cambodians had released the crew at the same time the ship was released. In fact, the crew members were enroute to the vicinity of the Mayaguez even before the U.S. assault started. Although U.S. authorities were unaware that the crew had been released with the ship, this information did become known and the crew was actually in U.S. custody before the final phase of the assault---the bombing of the Cambodian mainland---was completed. Also, U.S. authorities knew more than 14 hours before the assault that a senior diplomat representing a foreign government, whose identity

remains classified, was using its influence with Cambodia to seek an early release of the ship and crew. The diplomat had passed word to U.S. authorities that the ship and crew were expected to be released soon [3].

Regardless of the knowledge that the crew was already safely in U.S. custody and that a foreign government was actively working to resolve the crisis, President Ford directed that the bombing of the mainland proceed. The result destroyed or severely damaged 12 "old propeller-driven Cambodian aircraft," hangars, fuel storage facilities, and an anti-aircraft site at Ream Airfield, barracks and fuel storage facilities at Ream Naval Base, and two warehouses, an unused oil refinery, and a railroad marshalling yard building at Kompong Som port complex [4]. All of these facilities were on the Cambodian mainland miles from the marine assault at Koh Tang (Koh means island in the Thai language). The bombing has been criticized as unnecessary and without legitimate purpose. It therefore can be asked, "Why did the bombing take place?" "What military or political purposes were served?"

Reasons for the release of the crew members are not readily apparent. It is possible that the crew was released because of the third country influence. It is also possible that the continued heavy U.S. presence of U.S. Air Force reconnaissance and fighter aircraft near Cambodia since the

seizure had simply unnerved the Cambodians into releasing the crew. Others support the Cambodian view that the seizure had been the result of an overly zealous Cambodian officer who acted without authority and the Cambodian Government acted quickly to rectify the situation.

Some U.S. politicians later claimed the bombing constituted a purely "retaliatory" action and served no useful military purpose. President Ford was heavily criticized for ordering the bombing. Both Congress and the press expressed consternation over the decision. Elizabeth Holtzman of New York stated the following in the Congressional Record:

"The bombing of the mainland, from approximately 8:45 to midnight on May 14 raises other questions. Although this bombing was supposedly related either to the recovery of the Mayaguez crew or the protection of the Marines invading Koh Tang Island, it makes no sense with regard to either purpose. At the time of the bombing, the President believed that at least part of the crew was in the vicinity of Kompong Som. If the bombing was related to the recovery of the crew, why was it directed at an area in which they might have been held? And why did it continue for an hour after the crew was recovered?

If on the other hand, the bombing was intended to support the invasion and prevent Cambodian reinforcement of Koh Tang Island, its timing seems wrong. Why, for example, was it timed to begin with the recapture of the Mayaguez, rather than with the beginning of the island invasion? Since no attempts at reinforcement were reported, why was the bombing needed at all? Why were an oil depot and a naval base bombed after earlier bombings had destroyed Cambodian boats and planes in the area? Finally, if the bombing was intended to protect our Marines on the island, why did it end while they were still pinned down by enemy fire, not to be rescued until nine hours later?

The bombing of Kompong Som, therefore, seems to have had no military purpose directly related to the recovery of the Mayaguez and its crew or to the protection or rescue of the Marines. It was apparently punitive, part of the President's effort to make a show of force regardless of the needless destruction caused." [5]

In the aftermath of the assault, some 65 hours after the crisis began, 41 U.S. Marines were killed or missing and another 50 were wounded; ten of eleven helicopters were destroyed or damaged, while the U.S. Government suffered strained relations with Thailand, its only ally in southwest Asia. Cambodia also suffered significant personnel and property losses.

The Mayaguez crisis is studied at the U.S. Army War College as a classic case of crisis management. But is the real and only issue crisis management? Are there other important issues worthy of study?

Essentially, the seizure of the Mayaguez pitted United States and Cambodia against each other over matters of national will and international law. From a different perspective, the incident led to questions about U.S. crisis management procedures, not the least of which is, Was the incident a crisis?. The actions taken by the respective two governments, particularly those of the United States, raised major issues of diplomacy, expediency, and political precedent. The encompassing issue then was the rationale for the unusually strong and quick reaction of the United

States to an otherwise minor incident---one that ordinarily should have been handled through routine diplomatic channels. Perhaps Carl von Clausewitz anticipated such occurrences in international affairs when he wrote in his classic, On War:

"The same political object can elicit differing reactions from different people, even from the same people at different times...Between two peoples and two states, there can be such tensions, that the slightest quarrel can produce a wholly disproportionate effect---a real explosion [6].

CHAOS THEORY

National events during early 1975 were unprecedented. International events, too, were dramatic and extraordinary. Reactions to events at the national and international level remained within the bounds of expectant behavior, that is, both routine and unusual events resulted in characteristic responses by the participants. However, the rational, predictable behavior that characterized most diplomatic occurrences was abruptly violated by the actions that followed the seizure of the Mayaguez. The U.S. reaction may have been the result of the chaos it was experiencing and witnessing. If so, then it should have been predicted.

Classical science and political science are about cause and effect, characterized by a largely linear relationship. Non-classical science or chaos recognizes a less obvious relationship between cause and effect. It is generally characterized as a non-linear relationship. In this regard, the situation in 1975 could be called chaotic---effects were obvious, causes were not. If there was a relationship

between the seizing of the Mayaguez and the ensuing strong reaction by the U.S. and the generally chaotic political conditions that existed in the U.S., then it was general, non-specific and non-linear. Even from a cursory view, the war-like response by the U.S. exceeded the concept of proportionality.

As a premise, classical science anticipates that apples fall because of gravity; appearance and features of animals result from predetermined genetic structure; and, rational governments act within a prescribed set of norms. Order and structure are the basis of teaching and understanding. Science relies heavily upon the ability to duplicate experiments and derive consistent outcomes. A given action elicits a given response. At sea level water boils at one-hundred degrees and freezes at zero degrees Celsius. Change parameters and the results of the experiment change as well; water at a lower barometric pressure boils faster. Water at a higher barometric pressure freezes faster. Still, for classical science the results are largely anticipated and verifiable through repeated experiments.

The emerging science of Chaos, however, views the progression of water freezing to be constant, in the classical sense, until the very narrow range of temperature when the water turns into ice. At that time chaos develops. This phenomenon, a rapid and disproportional consequence of

a minor increase in input, manifests itself in many other physical occurrences as well; smoke from a cigarette rises in a tight column until a point where it spreads out into an undefined cloud; iron goes from "un"magnetized to magnetized at some undetermined point; and, two colors mix but retain their respective color characteristics until some point when a new color develops. In each of these cases, a normal pattern of behavior ensued until the very brink of uncertainty---or chaos---was reached. At that very narrow moment, the addition of just one more input into a defined universe---a butterfly flapping its wings, a loss of a nail, or the seizure of a merchant ship---pushed the consequences into chaos. There is an abrupt transition into this mysterious turbulence instead of a linear accumulation of input.

Edward Lorenz of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology called this behavior "almost intransitivity." It is evident when a system displays one sort of behavior for a long period of time and then suddenly and abruptly it shifts into a different representative behavior. Both behaviors exhibit a different type of behavior [7]. Progression no longer remains linear, but becomes nonlinear; some say less predictable. But is the system and the reaction really unpredictable? Chaos recognizes these exceptional happenings and finds a coarse order and discipline to the structure---order masquerading as randomness. There are two

natural kinds of behavior, one stable and observable over a long period of time, the other completely different, occurs less often, but is just as natural and observable [8].

Under a Bell-shaped curve, normal, or so-called Gaussian distribution, in principle, every phenomenon can be explained. Standard deviations from the center of the norm explain most observed results and account for most happenings. Researchers, economists, and politicians speak of these as probabilities. Usually though, regardless of how certain they may be of an outcome, some percentage is left for chance, luck, or "unforeseen circumstances." Seldom is anything so certain that the chance for a predictable outcome is absolute, certain, and guaranteed.

In Figure 1, the center area of the distribution curve reflects the "range of expectant behavior;" the range where most occurrences are probable. Whether hard science, economics, or politics, every action within this range elicits a comparable and somewhat predictable reaction. Raymond Cohen in his book, Threat Perception in International Crisis, calls this mutual expectation "rules of the game." He says,

"Rules point the way to a predetermined rendezvous. If the signpost should be knocked down or altered, travelers journeying apart will be unable to arrive at a common destination; coordinated behavior becomes impossible. But rules also perform a second, complementary boundary function: they demarcate the territory of the permissible from that of the

forbidden. And just as an infringement of "rules of the game" removes the only means of tacit restraint between them, it also removes the only means for tacit restraint between them." [9]

In figure 1, the width of the boundaries change as the range of available alternatives change. Significantly, the range of expectant behavior between like entities, animals within a species, elements within a compound, or nations within a political setting, may differ.

In a political sense, Great Britain could be characterized as having a relatively narrow range---political reactions are generally predictable, proportionate, reflect a mature outlook, and seldom go beyond the accepted range of expectant behavior. Libya, on the other hand, exhibits the perception of a wider range of expectant behavior. Responses run the gamut from reasonably assumed political behavior to outright, unpredictable terrorism to declared, open hostilities. In the case of both Great Britain and Libya, a dramatic event happened that changed their respective range of expectant behavior---Great Britain's became wider because of the Falkland Islands conflict; Libya's became more narrow after the U.S. air attack on its territory.

Stable Range of Expectant Behavior

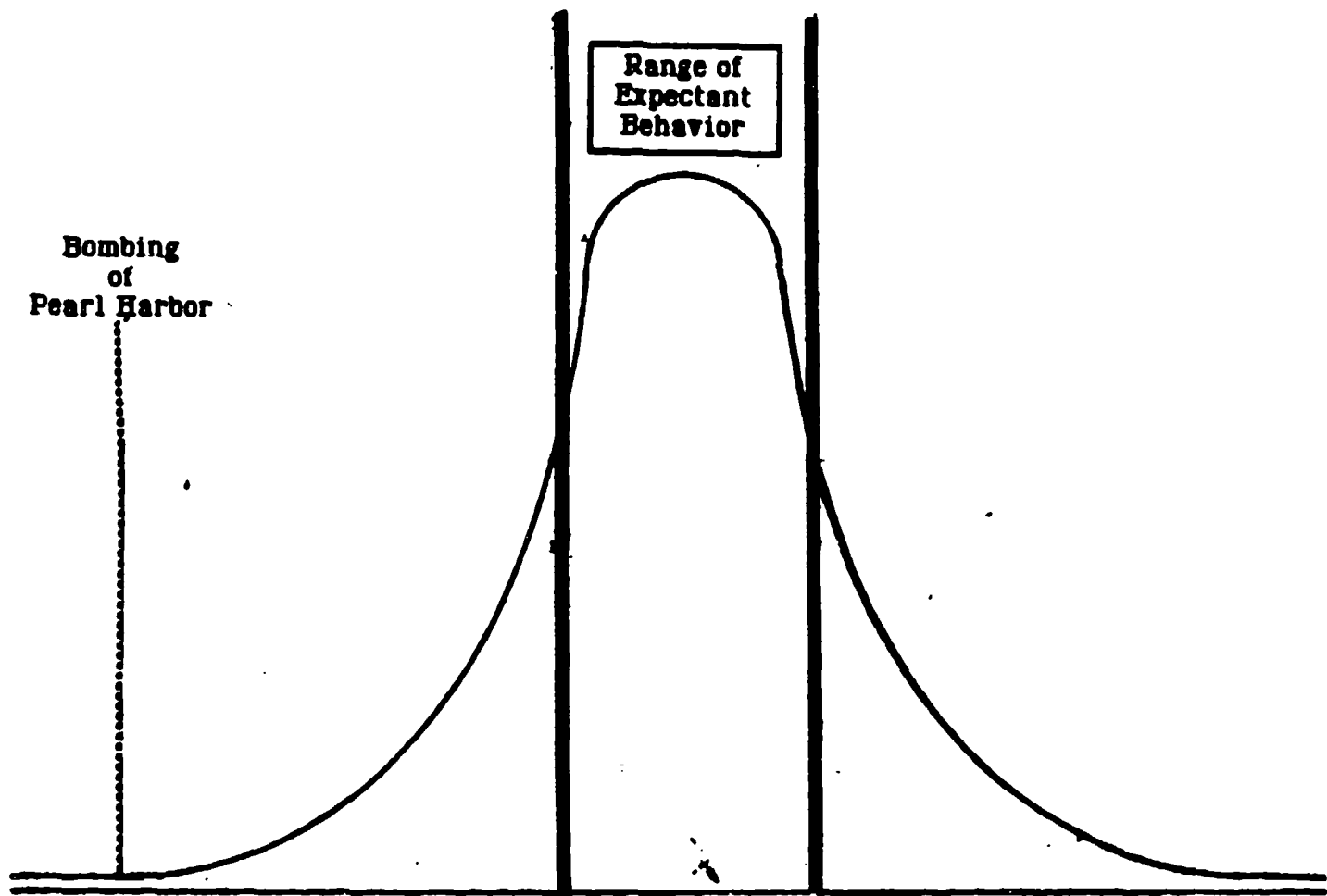


Figure 1

In dealing in the international arena, value lies in correctly assessing the political ranges of other countries for any period of time. This serves diplomatic relations well and allows outstanding issues to be resolved usually within the range of expectant behavior. Failure to accurately assess the political responsiveness of a nation to a given event has produced dire consequences---even war: Germany in World War I and II, Argentina in 1980, and Egypt in 1967, to name a few.

The reaction of one country to that of another should, therefore, ordinarily fall within its range of expectant behavior. Custom, international laws, and past behavior greatly influence, if not dictate, the width of the range. Dimensions, quantified by the number of possible reactions to any given event, are generally understood by all. In fact, nations are dependent upon understanding, appreciating, and respecting these norms in order to conduct diplomacy. If all adhere to the disciplines of this political discourse then there are few surprises.

Even if a catastrophic event occurred---one that fell outside the range of expectant behavior---such as the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941---a response that was expected and predictable should normally result. Some may say that given the growing hostile political relations

between the U.S. and Japan, that a hostile act should, in fact, have been anticipated. On the other hand, the attack was not adequately anticipated. Until it actually happened, both the U.S. and Japanese governments continued to play a diplomatic intrigue. In response to the bombing, the U.S. reacted predictably, forcibly, and as expected; the hostile act was returned in kind---a state of war existed.

Although the action taken by Japan against the U.S. was beyond the range of expectant behavior, the U.S. response to it was not. Responses of this type are similar to that of other nations that have a capability to respond---generally characterized as "tit for tat." When something happens out of the ordinary there is a tendency to return to the status quo or the expectant behavior range. Or to put it another way, there is a tendency to return to equilibrium. For instance, a pendulum clock is, as Dr. Lorenz would call it, an "intransitive system." It will swing rhythmically until it is disrupted by some outside force---a bump. It will then swing wildly or slow down at the onset of an influence and exhibit a pattern that is beyond the range of expectant behavior. Soon after, however, it will almost as rapidly return to its characteristic, precision rhythm. The aberration, though not expected, only temporarily disrupts the system. Classical science like political science expects harmony and strives to maintain it.

Explanations of most scientific and political situations focus on effects that are regulated, predictable, and largely linear. Given an approximate knowledge of a system's initial condition and an understanding of the natural laws that effect it, it is possible to calculate the approximate behavior of the system. That is, small changes produce small effects and large changes produce large effects such as the U.S. response to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Embassy personnel deported by one country for spying result in an equal number deported from the other, and so on. These action reflect some general law of proportionality.

The science of chaos, on the other hand, addresses occurrences where small changes result in gross effects. There is essentially a non-linear relationship between action and reaction. Consequences of actions (or non-action, as the case may be) are represented in the extreme tails of the normal distribution curve. Although they seldom occur, they can and do. Their occurrence, like the chaotic behavior of the bumped pendulum clock, are generally short-lived and are prone to return to a state of equilibrium or status quo. When results are determined to be complex then there is a tendency to search for complex causes; however, when random relationships are suspected between the input and the output of a system, there is an assumption that randomness would have to be incorporated

Into any realistic theory by "artificially adding noise" [10]. Clausewitz refers to this as the friction in war-"the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult" [11].

The science of chaos has one other important aspect. Unlike quantum mechanics or political science, Chaos Theory attempts to predict an outcome. Generally, the theory provides that given a general circumstance or situation that is near chaotic, any stimulus, however minor or routine, however distant in relation to the environment, is likely to cause the situation to become even more chaotic. The theory also considers short bursts of chaos such as the pendulum clock example or the eleven year cycle of intense solar activity. Both support short bursts of chaos separated by long intervals of regular behavior... a return to equilibrium. So even within chaos there is order.

Dr. Edward Lorenz first began developing the Theory of Chaos in the 1960's. He constructed a computer weather model that reduced the physics of the atmosphere to a few mathematical equations. These equations, temperature, pressure, etc., were used to simulate weather. When Dr. Lorenz attempted to repeat one forecast, however, he entered data into the computer rounded off to three decimal places rather than the usual six. The results were dramatic. They clearly did not relate to the previous outcome. In the jargon of Chaos Theory, the weather forecast displayed a

"sensitive dependence on initial conditions"[12]. The apparent minor change of rounding to three decimal places rather than six produced a major and totally different outcome. It is not inconceivable that this phenomenon could apply to political science, as well. True Chaos Theory is supported by complex mathematical formulas and references to partial dimensions; however, political science currently lacks this sophistication. As the science of Chaos develops further there will undoubtedly be an effort to associate the mathematics to all the sciences, political science included. For now, the basic theory will suffice to explain the general association with political science.

POLITICAL CHAOS

With regard to the political setting on May 12, 1975, extraordinary and unprecedented events were evident. President Nixon, on the verge of impeachment, became the nation's first deposed president by resigning nine months previously; John N. Mitchell, John D. Erlichman, and H.R. Halderman, former high ranking members of the Nixon Administration, were convicted and sentenced to two-and-a-half to eight years in prison for their roles in the Watergate cover-up; Robert C. Mardian was also convicted and is given a 10-month to three year sentence; worldwide inflation contributed to dramatic increases in the cost of fuel, food, and materials; oil-producing nations raised prices, heightening inflation; economic growth slowed to near zero in most industrialized nations; Dow Jones stock exchange index fell to 663 in 1974, the lowest level since 1970; Saigon, in the aftermath of the United States' first military and political defeat, fell to the Communists twelve days before the Mayaguez incident; and, Cambodia fell to the Communists only twenty-nine days earlier. President Ford

became the United States' first appointed president and granted former President Nixon a pardon for any criminal offenses committed while in office---widespread protests developed. The President later granted a limited amnesty to Vietnam War draft evaders and military deserters. These and other events contributed to a political atmosphere within the U.S. of self doubt and suspicion.

As president, Ford was yet unproven as a leader. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, lingering in the failed military and diplomatic resolution of Vietnam had failed to secure a second disengagement of forces between Egypt and Israel in the Sinai in March. The United States, like most other economies of the world, still suffered from the impact of the oil embargo of 1974. The status of the United States as an economic and world leader was clearly at a low ebb [13]. Table 1 depicts some of the major events of the period.

Cambodia, too, was experiencing internal turmoil. A long and especially violent war had just been concluded. Cambodian President Lon Nol fled besieged Phnom Penh before the Communist takeover; the U.S. Embassy closed and the last Americans left Cambodia. Khmer Rouge insurgents, flush with their recent victory, set up headquarters in Phnom Penh.

Table 1
Significant Events Prior to the Mayaguez Incident
(1974 through mid-1975)

Worldwide inflation helped to cause dramatic increases in cost of fuel, food, and materials

Oil-producing nations boosted prices, heightening inflation

Economic growth slowed to near zero in most industrialized nations

Terrorism continued in Northern Ireland and spreads to England

Tower of London and the Houses of Parliament were bombed

Greek-led Cypriot rebels overthrew the government

India became the sixth nation to explode a nuclear device

Maurice H. Stans, former U.S. Secretary of Commerce, became the third member of the Nixon cabinet to be convicted of violating campaign laws during the 1972 Nixon re-election campaign

John N. Mitchell, John D. Erlichman, and H.R. Haldeman, senior-level members of the Nixon Administration, were convicted and sentenced for their roles in Watergate.

Communist forces overran South Vietnam

Cambodian President Lon Nol fled besieged Phnom Penh before Communist takeover; U.S. Embassy closed

Unemployment rate in the U.S. reached 9.2%, highest since 1941

Eastern Airlines Jet crashed at New York's Kennedy International Airport---America's worst domestic airline crash

W.T. Grant stores, billions in debt, filed bankruptcy

New York City appealed to Federal government for cash to avert default

Two assassination attempts were made on the life of President Ford

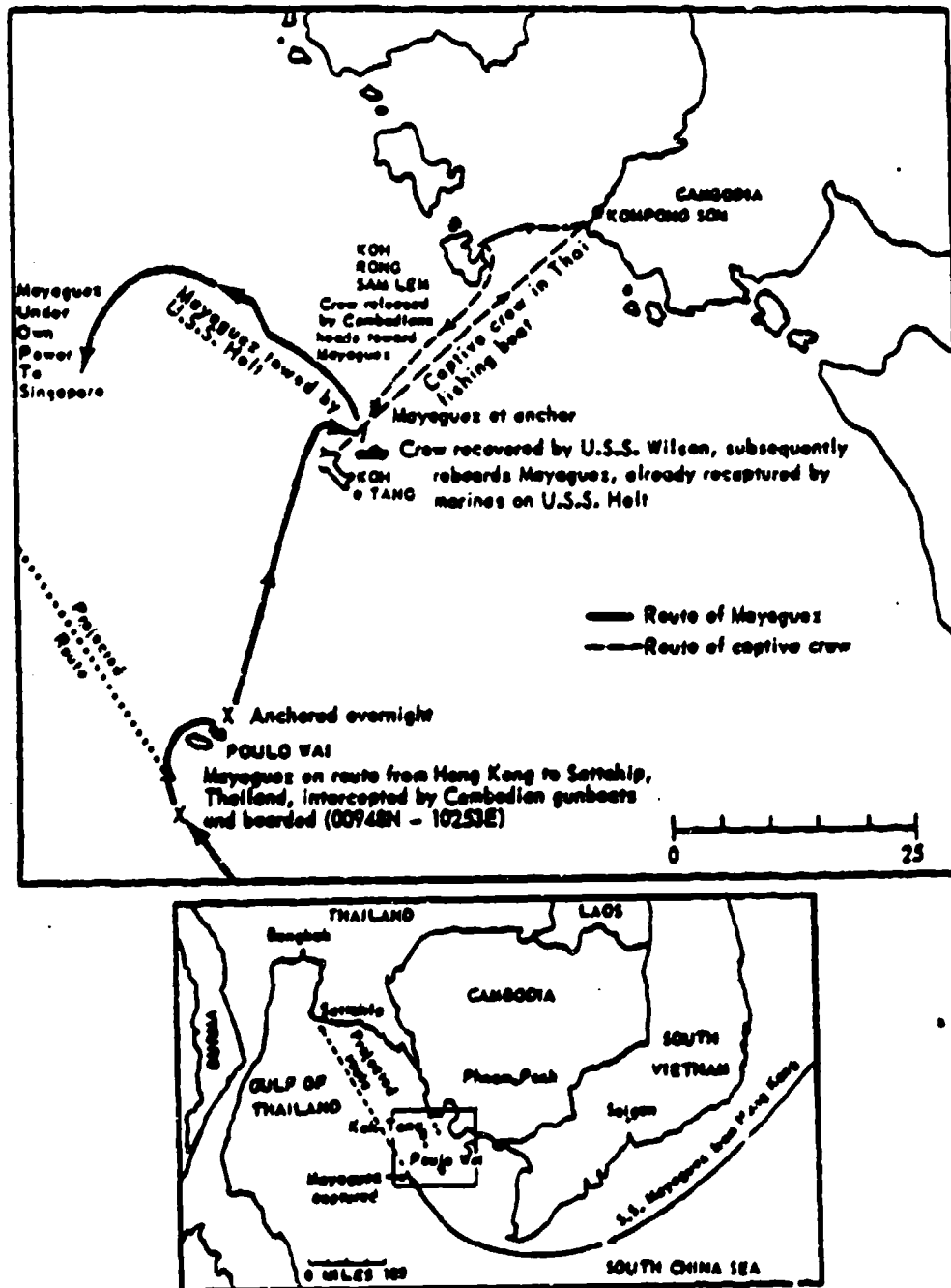
U.S. ended two decades of military involvement in Vietnam

The new government, though less than a month old, attempted to establish its nationalism and legitimacy by renouncing Vietnam and Thailand claims to the islands of Tang, Poulo Wai and Rong Sam Lem and announcing a twelve mile territorial limit. The islands located up to sixty miles off the coast of Cambodia, were claimed by Cambodia as a historical right. Figure 2 shows the general location of the Mayaguez during the crisis and the location of the islands. An ongoing, sometimes hostile, dispute existed between Cambodia and the nations of Vietnam and Thailand.

The new Cambodian government in Phnom Penh also lacked credibility in the international community. It had few diplomatic missions in other countries. Cambodia, geographically located in a region of intense and prolonged warfare, genuinely felt threatened by outside forces.

Cambodia's population, weary of war, was adjusting to the hardships of postwar. People were forcibly relocated from the cities where there was safety during the war to the countryside where there was more food. In short, the Cambodian government faced difficult and unprecedented times. Externally, the government faced outrage and consternation about alleged atrocities conducted against its people during the war. Internally, the government attempted

Figure 2
Location of the Mayaguez



Report of the Comptroller General of the United States,
"The Seizure of the Mayaguez---A Case study of Crisis Management,
4 October 1976, page 64.

to rebuild its economy and to structure its government to function in an international political environment .

The circumstances in evidence for the United States and Cambodia in the mid-70's had both contrasts and similarities. The respective situations, though different, shared a similarity of being considered extreme, even chaotic.

If the Theory of Chaos applies equally to politics as it does to the classical science, then the chaotic political conditions that existed, could easily be further exacerbated by only a minor discord, i.e., the butterfly effect. Only a catalyst was needed, one that would serve to catapult the already wild U.S. political situation into a temporary state of chaos.

The enormous military power of the United States presented an especially volatile and dangerous situation to the world. In Chaos Theory the use of military means to solve an otherwise minor political problem cannot be ruled out. Indeed, Clausewitz viewed war as, "a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means"[14]. It is, "a part of man's social existence"[15], that "the only source of war is politics"[16]. Implicit in his statements is that war is an act of choice; not "merely added violence to perfidy"[17]. Regardless, history

vividly documents the use of military power as an element of political power even among civilized states. Many use war often to further or protect national interests. Others, like the U.S., have initiated it less often.

While Cambodia had the military means to inflict harm to its own people, without external help, it lacked the ability to conduct a formidable military capability beyond its territory. Its inferior military power, a few propeller driven aircraft and five U.S. manufactured patrolboats, would be particularly inadequate against that of the United States---a case of the sparrow challenging the eagle. Therefore, a real military response by Cambodia to be considered a threat against the U.S. would be improbable.

In response to a highly abnormal situation, one that bordered on the extremes of possibilities, Chaos Theory would predict abnormal consequences. If applied to the political situation evident in mid-1975, the otherwise minor incident like the seizing of the Mayaguez, could, like the flapping of a butterfly's wings, produce a dramatic and unfortunate response. If the military might of the United States was unleashed as a consequence of an otherwise minor event such as the seizing of the Mayaguez, the response could be tragic. However, the response would not be unexpected. Time and circumstances were ripe for an eventful happening.

The seizure of the Mayaguez set into motion a series of events that produced a major and uncharacteristic response by the United States---one that without the Theory of Chaos could not have been expected. Figure 3 represents a graphic portrayal of the relative domestic situation in mid-1975. The seizure of the Mayaguez was within the range of expectant behavior because the action was not extraordinary or exceptional. Seizures of U.S. ships by foreign nations had occurred before, but in those incidences the recovery had been handled as a routine matter through diplomatic channels.

**Relative Range of Expectant Behavior
at the Time of the Mayaguez**

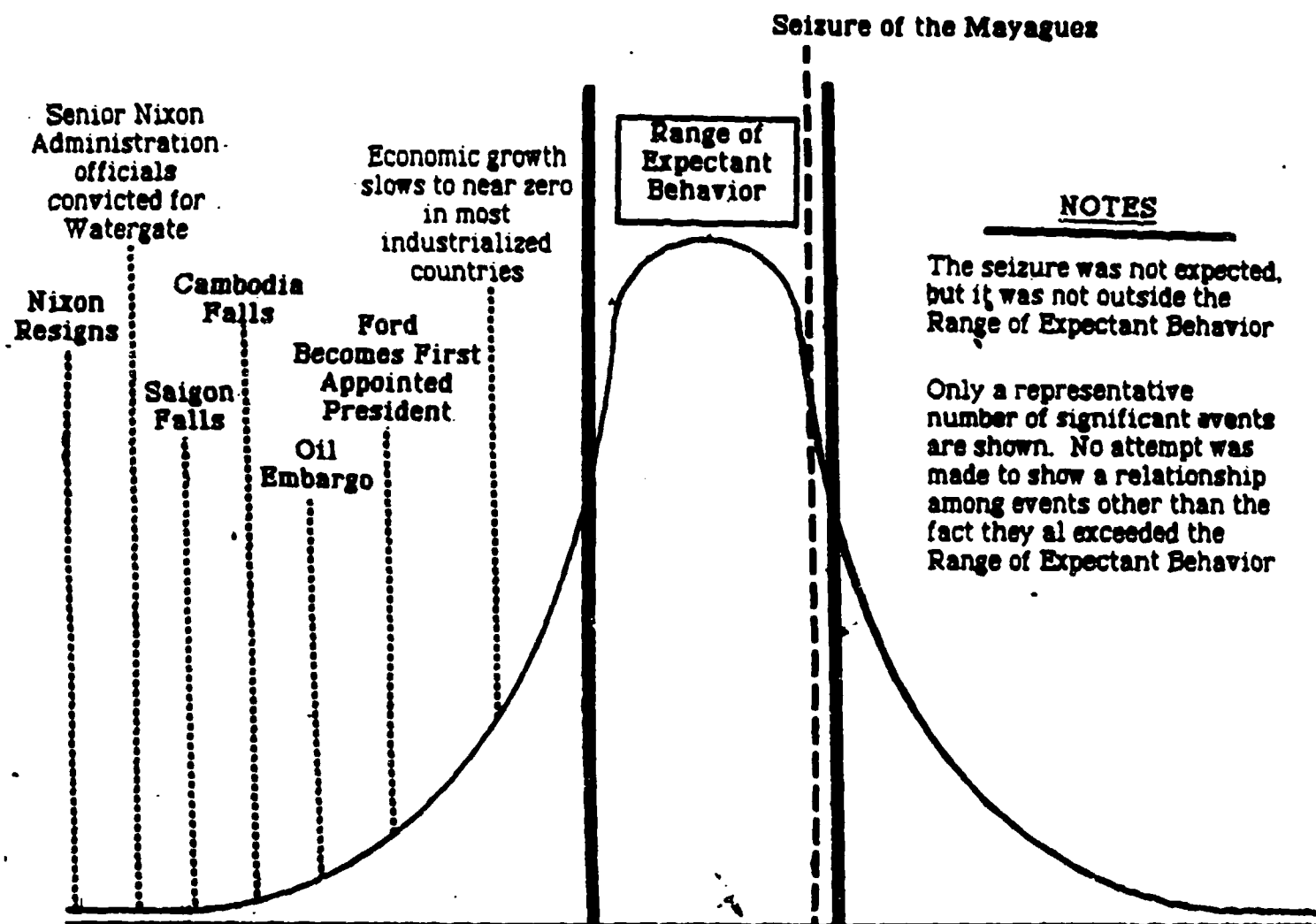


Figure 3

THE SEIZURE

At 2:18 pm on May 12, 1975, a representative of the Sea Land Service Corporation, located in Jakarta, Indonesia, received a Mayday message from one of the company's ships, the Mayaguez. The ship had been sailing in the Gulf of Thailand about sixty miles from the Cambodian coast eight miles from Poulo Wai, one of the islands claimed by both Cambodia and Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge forces maintained a garrison on Poulo Wai and took direct action to enforce the newly announced 12-mile territorial sea limit. The United States, aware of the active enforcement of what Cambodia claimed as a sovereign right and aware, too, of recent seizures of foreign vessels, did not regard the situation with great concern. Although the U.S. Defense Mapping Agency Hydrographic Center has responsibility for broadcasting warnings to U.S. shipping, it had not issued any about Cambodian actions [18]. It would be two days after the seizure of the Mayaguez before a warning to mariners would be broadcast. Not surprisingly, Congress

soon made this apparent lapse in responsibility the subject of a Congressional Hearing.

Information concerning Cambodian motivations prior to the first National Security Council Meeting, held about seven hours after news of the seizure was received in Washington, included the knowledge that:

1. Ten days prior to the seizure Cambodia had seized and later released a group of Thai fishing boats.
2. Eight days previously, Cambodian patrol boats had fired upon and unsuccessfully attempted to capture a South Korean ship.
3. Six days earlier, six vessels fleeing from South Vietnam and a South Vietnam government boat were seized by Cambodia.
4. Five days earlier, Cambodia had stopped, seized, and searched a Panamanian ship. It was released 36 hours later.
5. Five days previously, Cambodian officials were focusing interest on controlling certain outlying islands because of possible petroleum reserves.
6. Three days earlier there was evidence that Cambodia planned to enforce by seizing all foreign ships, a 90 mile territorial limit [19].

With regard to the Mayaguez, Cambodian officials later claimed that the ship was actually "two and a half to three miles from the island" instead of the eight miles claimed by U.S. authorities [20]. Also, that United States observation aircraft had flown over Cambodia daily since the Communist overthrow in April and that small boats carrying Thai and Cambodian agents with U.S. radio equipment and bombs had been caught in Cambodian waters [21]. U.S. authorities

acknowledged the reconnaissance flights, but denied any other intelligence activities involving ships. Suspicions about foreign vessels entering its territorial waters were justified and, for Cambodia, cause for alarm. It was these suspicions that encouraged the Cambodian seizure of the Mayaguez.

The Mayday message received from the Mayaguez stated that the ship had been fired upon and boarded by Cambodian naval forces and that it was being towed to an unknown Cambodian port. Captain Miller, Captain of the Mayaguez, later stated during the hearings of the Subcommittee on International Political and Military Affairs that addressed, "Seizure of the Mayaguez", that his ship was boarded by seven armed insurgents and a young boy. The young boy carried an eight-foot shoulder rocket launcher. Captain Miller also stated that none of the insurgents spoke any English. In fact two days lapsed before any communications beyond hand signals were possible.

President Ford called the Cambodian seizure an "act of piracy". The Cambodian government had a different view. Ieng Sary, a Cambodian Deputy Premier, stated four months later, the seizure was made by a local commander without the knowledge of the Phnom Penh Government [22]. He further stated that after his government found out about the incident from an American radio broadcast, the local

commander was "under instructions to release the Mayaguez immediately"[23]. A public announcement to that effect was made over commercial radio and monitored by the U.S. Before the local commander could act, however, U.S. officials, reacting to the order from President Ford, had already set into motion a military plan to recapture the ship and its crew.

Cambodian forces had actually released the crew members before the planned U.S. military action; however, some senior U.S. military officials claim that this information was not properly disseminated to decision makers until after the military action was completed. Others claim that they were aware of it, but a decision had been made to continue with the military action for "demonstration purposes"[24]. Press Secretary Ron Nessen announced at a news briefing on May 14, 1975, the President's decision to use "military measures" to obtain the release of the Mayaguez and crew and that operations would stop "promptly" once Cambodia issued a statement to release the crew members [25]. Elizabeth Holtzman, (D-N.Y.), in a prepared statement to the International Political and Military Affairs Committee on June 25, 1975 stated:

"On the basis of information currently available, it appears that the President's chief concern in this matter was to make a show of force in Asia, a show perhaps prompted by a desire to obliterate the memory of our defeat in Indochina. This conclusion about President Ford's intent is justified, in the first

place, by his tardy and utterly inadequate efforts at securing the release of the crewmen through diplomacy. Although he was reportedly notified of the seizure of the Mayaguez at approximately 6:30 a.m. on March 12 (sic), the President did not attempt to make diplomatic contact with the Cambodian government until 4:30 p.m., 10 hours later.

At no time did President Ford have any assurance that any message had been received by the Cambodian government before the invasion and bombing began. In fact, at no time did American authorities initiate any direct contact with Cambodia, by radio or otherwise. Moreover, despite receiving a Cambodian message announcing the release of the Mayaguez as the invasion was beginning, President Ford continued the invasion and waited more than an hour to reply"[26].

One can only guess the actual reason for the U.S. delay in ceasing military action. Regardless of the reason, the seizure acted as a trip wire. It set into motion a series of events that caused the Mayaguez to become the focal point of two nations. One, the United States, considered to be the most militarily powerful nation on earth, had recently suffered a humiliating political failure in a costly and unpopular war. It had also suffered embarrassment over the Watergate scandal---conviction of senior government officials, and a deposed president. The other, Cambodia, had an unproven communist government that was but three weeks old and had reached only a fragile peace with its people. These two unlikely nations, David and Goliath, now clashed in a battle of wills over a ship...a ship with 40 Americans aboard...a ship that had been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

U.S. Army Colonel, Zane Finklestein, legal advisor to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, equated the seizure situation to "two blind men in a dark room looking for a black cat that wasn't there"[27]. On the surface, the situation appeared to be routine, but for the U.S., uncertainty about the real purpose of the seizure and a still burning embarrassment about recent challenges to its leadership, caused strong action to be taken quickly.

THE SHIP

Only when the Vietnam war broke out did the Mayaguez reach its full potential as a containerized ship. Its two large on-board cranes, used to load and unload the ship's maximum load of 274 containers, made it ideal to operate from Asian ports.

The Mayaguez sailed with her forty crew members from Hong Kong on the morning of May 7, 1975. Loaded with 184 35-foot and 40-foot containers, she steamed to her destination, Sattahip, Thailand, at 12.5 knots. Seventy-seven of the containers carried military supplies. The others contained general cargo such as food, shoes, furniture, and clothing [28]. Neither the ship nor its crew were armed.

Captain Miller later told a congressional hearing panel that the Cambodians had no way of knowing that the Mayaguez was an American ship because "we don't fly the flag at sea". Based on this, plus the fact none of the Cambodians spoke English it appears the seizure of the Mayaguez was more of a

target of opportunity than a deliberate attempt to embarrass the United States.

After the ship was taken, questions immediately arose. Why had the ship been taken? Was it involved in any intelligence gathering activities for the U.S.? Or was it just what it appeared---an unarmed cargo ship under contract to the U.S. government on a routine voyage in the Gulf of Thailand? Should the seizure be handled through diplomatic channels? How could the crew be saved? The principle issues the U.S. took from a position of strength were, What's happened?, Why did it happen?, and What comes next?[29].

Secretary of State Kissinger said in a speech the day after the seizure, "The United States will not accept harassment of its ships on international sea lanes" [30]. President Ford later said that the United States' slow reaction to the Pueblo incident that began on January 23, 1968 and the similarities of it to the Mayaguez crisis provided a "benchmark" from which to proceed [31].

Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger does not recall President Ford talking much about the Pueblo, nor does he remember it figuring in his own thoughts [32]. However, in contrast to the seizure of the U.S. intelligence ship, Pueblo, and the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August, 1964, when North Vietnamese patrol boats allegedly fired on two

U.S. destroyers, the Mavaguez seizure did not involve U.S. Navy ships. It was a commercial ship of private U.S. ownership. This fact made the incident more akin to the seizure of an American tuna boat by Ecuador for fishing within a claimed 200 mile limit or of the U.S. seizure of a Russian vessel for fishing within the U.S. claimed limit than it did to a deliberate act of war.

For both military and commercial reasons, the United States officially recognizes territorial claims only up to three miles; however, in the past it has claimed exclusive jurisdiction over mineral rights as far as 200 miles from the coast [33]. Only five days after the seizing of the Mavaguez, the U.S. Coast Guard seized a Polish fishing trawler off the California coast for operating within the 12-mile fishing limit claimed by the United States. The situation was resolved, within the range of expectant behavior, that is, in a court of law.

With regard to the Mavaguez, the central issues under international law became the "right of passage" against the right to declare and enforce an economic territorial limit. A third factor addressed the right to inspect a ship suspected of engaging in a belligerent action---spying, of making warlike actions---or of disturbing any mineral or fishing rights claimed by the nation. Or even when hostile actions are not suspected, the right of a nation to

"inspect" ships that transgress its claimed territorial limit.

As the Mayaguez situation started to unfold, more questions arose. President Ford felt that strong action had to be taken. The National Security Council agreed. However, the lack of credible information about Cambodia and its intentions left the U.S. with few options and little time. The real crisis developed when U.S. authorities "realized there was nothing that we could do" [34]. Some action had to be taken. Along with the advice of the National Security Council and that of Dr. Kissinger, who was given the role of "preeminent hawk [35]," President Ford assumed direct control of the situation and at the first meeting of the National Security Council, directed several diplomatic overtures to be taken [36]:

- o A public statement demanding the immediate release of the Mayaguez was released at 1:50 p.m., May 12. This is significant for two reasons: the statement was not issued until after the first meeting of the NSC and 10 hours after the seizure; and only included the release of the ship and did not specify the crew. (This latter point is particularly important. It was the failure of the Cambodians to specifically mention the crew when the release of the ship was announced

that President Ford cited as justification for continuing the military action against Cambodia.)

- o An attempt was made to deliver a message through the People's Republic of China Liaison Office in Washington, D.C. to the Cambodians at 4:30 p.m., May 12.

- o An attempt to deliver messages to the Cambodian Embassy and the Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China in Peking was made at 12:10 a.m., May 13. George Bush, later to become President of the United States, was the U.S. Liaison Officer to China at the time.

- o The United States formally sought the assistance of U.N. Secretary General Waldheim in securing the release of the ship and crew between 1 and 2 p.m., May 14.

- o A response was made at 9:15 p.m. on May 14 to a Cambodian radio broadcast that military operations would cease only when the Cambodians stated they would return the crew.

The diplomatic efforts directed by President Ford to resolve the crisis were heavily criticized as only token efforts and lacking in good faith. It was generally felt that insufficient time had been allowed for diplomatic

resolution. Even before the military assault began, Congress expressed concern about the use of diplomacy as the preferred course of action. Senator Robert Taft Jr. (R - Ohio) urged that the United States "try all kinds of sanctions before resorting to force". Senator Hubert Humphrey (D - Minn) urged the government to "stop, look and listen" before it resorts to force". And Senator Jacob Javits (R - N.Y.) said that Americans should "keep our shirts on and see if they return the ship" [37]. Others in Congress shared President Ford's outrage and pushed for direct military intervention. With little else to go on, Congressmen generally expressed fears of getting involved in anything that resembled a another Vietnam and equated the situation to that of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Once the crisis began, President Ford became the focal point for decision making. He was both a fill-in Vice President then a fill-in President. Former President Johnson characterized him as someone who "could not walk and chew gum at the same time [38]." President Ford undoubtedly saw the seizure both as a personal challenge as a former Navy officer and as a possible opportunity to establish his political credentials. The fact the following year was a presidential election year and there was obvious political gain to be had could not have been missed as well. More fundamentally, the Mayaguez incident offered Ford a chance to erase some of the memories of the evacuation of Saigon by helicopters. It offered him a chance to demonstrate the leadership to be President. As the minority leader of the House of Representatives during the Vietnam conflict, Ford had been outspoken and always called for stronger measures [39]. Now he had his chance to act.

With regard to Presidential micromanagement, President Ford's deep involvement in the Mayaguez incident ranks at the

very top of a list of previous and subsequent military actions that includes Beirut, Grenada, and Panama [40]

PRESIDENTIAL INVOLVEMENT							
SPECIAL TRUST AND CONFIDENCE	INTEREST		ATTENTION		MICROMANAGEMENT		
GRENADA							
SINAI PEACEKEEPING	LIBYA FON (1981)	LIBYA FON (1986)	PANAMA (1989)	LIBYAN AIRSTRIKE (1986)	PERSIAN GULF	ROLLING THUNDER	BEIRUT
Table 2				LINEBACKER	CYPRUS EVACUATION (1974)		MAYAGUEZ

Others within President Ford's advisory council, to include Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, Secretary of State Kissinger, and acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force General Jones (General George S. Brown, the chairman, was in Europe on official business), saw a challenge to American power and to the principle of freedom of the seas. Clearly, the incident provided a chance to demonstrate the military establishment's competence, and as a consequence, to lift military and public morale. Kissinger may have had a deeper, more personal interest. He, more so than anyone else, was closely linked to the fall of Saigon a few weeks earlier. So, the president and his primary advisors, appeared to be primed for the strong response that followed. They were united in their effort.

The participants differed slightly during the various meetings of the National Security Council (NSC), but generally included:

President

Vice President

Secretary of State

Secretary of Defense

Director, Central Intelligence Agency

Deputy Secretary of State

Deputy Secretary of Defense

Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General David Jones

Assistant to the President, Donald Rumsfeld

Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs

Senior NSC Staff Officer for East Asia, Richard Smyser

Counselor to the President, John Marsh

Counselor to the President, Robert Hartman

At the time of the crisis, Henry Kissinger held both the post of Secretary of State and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. At each NSC meeting, the Deputy Secretary of State presented the views of the Department of State while Dr. Kissinger acted as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs [41].

As for the decision making process, President Ford followed an established procedure: he listened to options suggested by the other members of the National Security Council; consulted with them and received assurances that the information was current and correct, made his decision; and, lastly, he conferred further

with the National Security Council, presented the rationale for his decision, and sought concurrence. "In every instance, the answer was unanimous agreement to every decision [42].

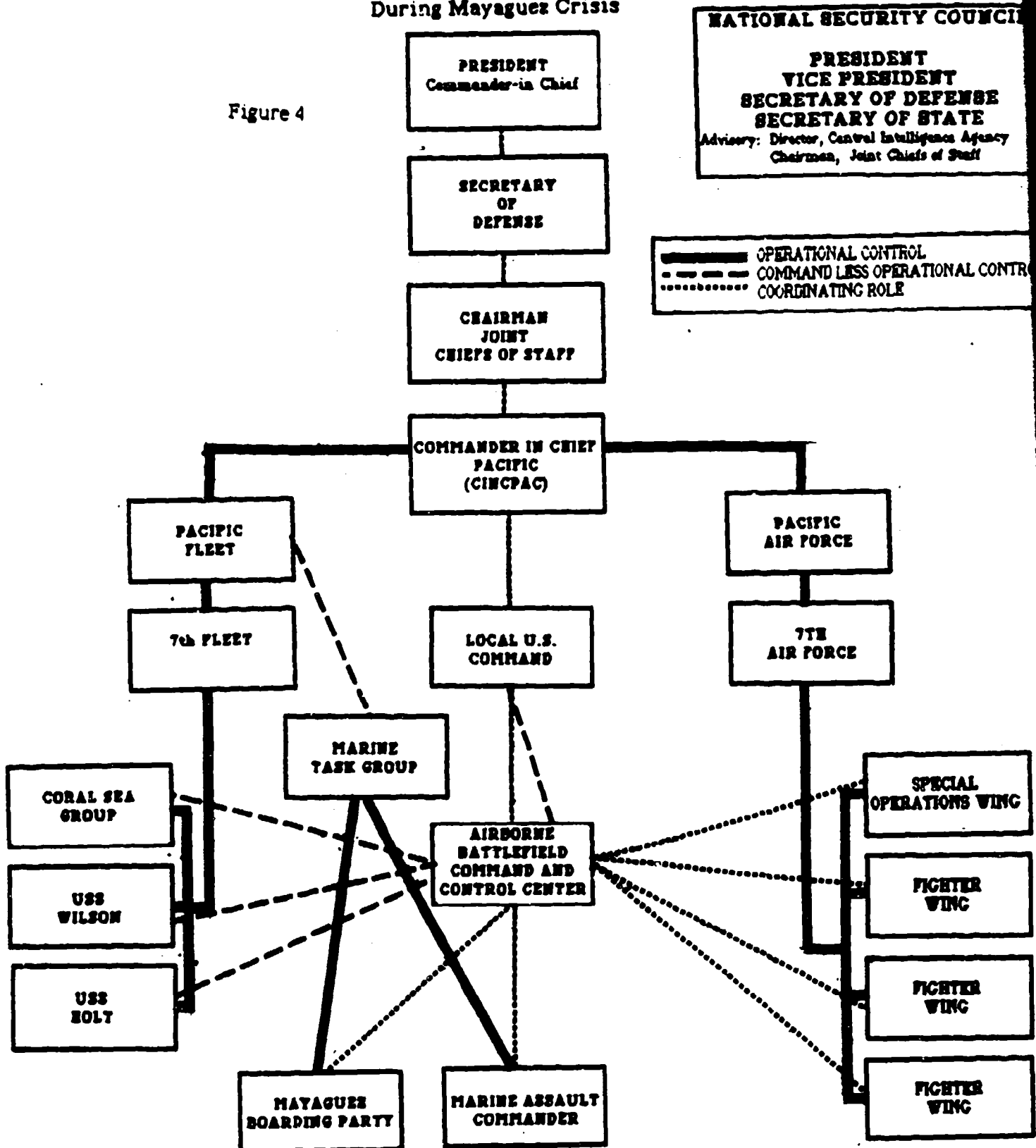
Military orders were then issued from President Ford through Lieutenant General Scowcroft, the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs, to Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, General David C. Jones to the Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC). CINCPAC had planning and operational responsibility for the entire operation.

The National Security Council met a total of four times during the crisis. The first meeting, about seven hours after Washington received notice about the seizure, was on Monday, May 12th at noon. The meeting lasted forty-five minutes. The second meeting was the following day. It started at 10:30 and lasted one hour. The third meeting was held the night of May 13th at 10:40 p.m. It lasted about two hours. The final meeting was held on the afternoon of May 14th at 3:52 p.m. That meeting lasted until 5:40 p.m.

As indicated in Figure 4, CINCPAC, located in Hawaii, exercised different control measures over each of the services. There was no centralized military command authority over all the services. The local U.S. commander, an Air Force general, was directed by CINCPAC to develop the plan for the rescue operation.

U.S. MILITARY CHAIN OF COMMAND During Mayaguez Crisis

Figure 4



Modified from a chart contained in The Comptroller General of the United States, "The Seizure of the Mayaguez---A Case Study of Crisis Management", 4 October 1976, page 86.

Control by CINCPAC over Naval operations was through the CINCPAC Fleet and the 7th Fleet. Significantly, CINCPAC Fleet exercised no operational control (OPCON) over the participating naval units---the U.S.S. Holt, the U.S.S. Wilson, and the Coral Sea Group. CINCPAC Fleet's mission was to train, equip, provide, administer, and discipline the naval forces involved. Its job was to support, not to fight.

Marines would normally come under Navy control. However, once the Marine Task Group arrived in the "Mayaguez" theater of operations, it came under the control of the U.S. Air Force commander based in Thailand. This local U.S. command controlled all Marine forces once the operation began.

Control of the air forces was not as awkward. The Commander, 7th Air Force and the local U.S. commander were the same individual. Once orders were received from CINCPAC they were passed to the operational wings by the Commander, 7th Air Force/local U.S. commander. Command authority was not an issue with the Air Force.

Finally, the airborne battlefield command and control center, was essentially a communications link. It had no real authority of its own. It merely relayed information and attempted to understand and influence the combat situation as it developed. Since the plan called for the

airborne battlefield command and control center to orbit in an about ninety nautical miles from Koh Tang, this was not an easy task.

During the operation, radio links brought the sounds of the assault wave to the White House and to the Pentagon. President Ford could hear the helicopters and the "plings" of bullets from Khmer Rouge rifles [43]. The rapidity of communications did have one undesirable feature---it encouraged centralized decision making. In fact, during the incident, the communications network was utilized by the president to exercise direct control over the use of military force. For example, the communications capability allowed President Ford to decide whether to attack a vessel heading toward the Cambodian mainland which was suspected of carrying Mayaguez crew members.

Later, he was able to cancel and then reinstate the initial air strikes against Kompong Som [44]. The president, in fact, had better communications than the U.S. commanders in the vicinity of Tang Island during the combat operations. This was in spite of the use of an on-scene C-130 communications relay aircraft. At the operational level, the lack of radio interoperability posed a major problem for controlling the forces and understanding the situation as it unfolded.

Communications normally follow the same channels as the chain of command in military operations. However, the lack of reliable communications within the combat area and the relatively good communications between the combat forces and Washington D.C., allowed, if not encouraged, active participation by personnel in Washington. There was a communications and, by inference, a control void to fill. It was filled. The ability to monitor and communicate with the combatants from Washington minimized opportunities for local commanders to take total control. In addition, the likelihood of questioning decisions made by Washington were for all practical purposes eliminated.

Within the State Department problems were also evident. Lower level officers with long experience in Cambodia were excluded from contributing or otherwise participating in the crisis management [45]. President Ford,

"seems to have struck in Southeast Asia not as a last resort after exhaustive diplomacy, not in some genuinely informed calculus of the adversary's intentions, but by what must have been a largely intuitive judgment that he had no other choice" [46].

War Powers Act

Passed over President Nixon's veto in November 1973, the War Powers Resolution attempts to restrict the president's authority to involve the U.S. in armed conflict or in situations likely to involve such conflict. It was passed in response to the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. The act explicitly requires the President to report to Congress, within forty eight hours of their deployment, any commitment of troops to actual or imminent hostilities or any introduction of troops into the territory, air space, or waters of a foreign nation while they are equipped for combat. The act further requires that the President consult with Congress prior to so acting. Congress is required to approve or disprove the continued use of troops within sixty days of their commitment. If Congress fails within sixty days (or ninety days if the President certifies that troop safety requires the added time) the continued use of the forces, the President must withdraw them.

Although President Ford notified Congress in accordance with the War Powers Resolution, he did so only in

"accordance with my desire that Congress be informed on this matter"[47]. There has been a reluctance of President Ford and President Nixon before him, and President Carter after him, to fully accept the requirements of the War Powers Resolution. Special reluctance has been over adhering to the "consultation" provision.

Although President Ford made indirect contact with congressional leaders several times throughout the crisis, according to several Senate leaders, the letter of the law was not upheld. Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana said, "I was not consulted. I was notified after the fact about what the Administration had already decided" [48]. Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, the third-ranking Republican in the House, said he was disappointed that Mr. Ford had done no more than "calling up and saying here's what we've decided" [49]. Consultation with Congress occurred at 2:30 a.m.---four hours before the advanced notification would have expired under the terms of the War Powers Resolution. Whatever the political rhetoric, President Ford's actions avoided a legal confrontation with Congress.

The following documents the various contacts made by the President, his staff, and executive branch officials with Congress during the Mayaguez crisis [50]:

May 13 (5:50 p.m.-11 p.m.) The President directed that White House staff officers contact ten House and eleven Senate Members regarding the planned military measures to prevent the Mayaguez and its crew from being transferred to the Cambodian mainland. The action was also designed to prevent Cambodian reinforcements of Koh Tang Island where the Marine assault was to take place.

May 14 (11:50 a.m.-12 noon) 11 House and 11 Senate Members were notified that three Cambodian vessels had been sunk and four others damaged. This action was taken to prevent removal of the Mayaguez crew to the mainland of Cambodia.

May 14 (2 p.m.-5 p.m.) Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs briefed the House International Relations Committee on the status of the crisis. Other briefings were made by the Legal Advisor, Office of Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and the National Intelligence Officer for South and Southeast Asia, Central Intelligence Agency.

May 14 (6:30 p.m.) The congressional leadership was personally briefed by the President about his specific orders for the recapture of the ship and crew.

Although the War Power Resolution specifically says that "the President in every possible instance shall consult with Congress before introducing U.S. armed forces into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated", the wording left room for interpretation: it is qualified by the phrase "in every possible instance" and the word "consult" is not defined. The wording also leaves unanswered, the manner by which the President is to "consult" with Congress. For the most part, President Ford "consulted" through his staff to the Congressional leaders.

Once the crisis was over, congressional discussions about President Ford's compliance or non-compliance with the requirements of the War Powers Resolution were not particularly harsh nor prolonged. The apparent success and the short duration of the commitment of military forces undoubtedly had something to do with limiting congressional concern. Even when briefed personally by the President the day before the assault, there was no objection expressed by the congressional leadership. The majority of congressmen hailed the President for the quick, decisive daring of the operation; only a few asked whether he exceeded his authority.

THAI REACTION

The military plan to retake the Mayaguez and free its crew required the use of nearby forces. Sufficient forces were not available in nearby Thailand, the planned staging area. So plans were made to fly ground forces to Thailand. Premier Kukrit Pramoj of Thailand stated that if the U.S. military assault force, 1000 U.S. Marines, came to Thailand then Thailand, "cannot be friends with the United States any more [51]." U.S. diplomatic and military officials in Bangkok refused to comment regarding the prime minister's proclamation.

On the morning of May 13, 1975 at the second NSC meeting, it was announced that the Thai Prime Minister had emphasized that Thailand would not permit use of its bases for U.S. action against Cambodia.

The U.S. Charge d'Affairs informed the Thai Government that the United States would inform it before initiating any action involving U.S. planes based in Thailand. It was then reported by the U.S. Charge d'Affairs in Thailand to

the Secretary of State, that the U.S. should "play by the rules" or stand to lose Thai support and cooperation [52].

Within six hours after the second NSC meeting, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that two Marine platoons from the Philippines, and a Marine battalion from Okinawa be moved to Utapao, Thailand Air Base. The Thai Government promptly protested this action pending arrival of the U.S. Marines.

U.S. Marines arrived in Thailand the next day. The Premier charged that the arrival of the marines violated Thai sovereignty and that the troops were to leave Thailand immediately. In a diplomatic message to President Ford, Prime Minister Khukrit Pramoj wrote the following:

"...The Thai Government considers that this action (the arrival of the Marines) by the United States Government is not consistent with the goodwill existing between Thailand and the United States, and unless these forces which have entered against the wishes of the Thai Government are withdrawn immediately, the good relations and cooperation existing between the Thailand and the United States would be exposed to serious and damaging consequences" [53].

The U.S. ignored the Prime Minister's demand and the troops left Thailand only after the military operation had been concluded two days later.

On May 19, 1975, U.S. Charge d'Affairs Edward Masters delivered to the Foreign Minister of Thailand, Chatchai Choonavan in Bangkok, a diplomatic note. It stated that:

"The United States regrets the misunderstandings that have arisen between Thailand and the United States in regard to the temporary placement of marines at Utapao to assist in the recovery of the S.S. Mayaguez. The United States wishes to express its understanding of the problem caused the Royal Thai Government..."[54]

The U.S. Embassy in Thailand reported the view that if U.S. Marines were withdrawn speedily, U.S. relations ~~will~~ *would* eventually recover from the Mayaguez crisis.

A search of all unclassified published sources failed to substantiate a statement by Ron Rowan in his book, The Four Days of Mayaguez, that "privately", Thailand had given its concurrence to the staging of the marines in Thailand [55]. Mr. Rowan cites a private conversation with President Ford as one of his sources for his book. His conclusion carries with it the following: U.S./Thai relations remained strong after the crisis; Thailand, suffering an uneasy relationship with its Asian neighbors, was naturally hesitant about openly welcoming U.S. involvement; and, Thailand was able to reap the dividends of being a protected U.S. ally. In addition, Thailand and Cambodia relations were strained over the disputed islands.

The Cost

The captain and thirty-nine crewmen of the Mayaguez were freed. Of the one hundred seventy-nine marines who participated in the operation, fifteen were killed during the assault, three others were missing and presumed dead, and another twenty-three lost their lives in a related helicopter crash in Thailand. Fifty additional marines were wounded [56]. Reportedly, the Cambodian death toll was at 25 [57].

Two other factors are worthy of mention: the use of riot agents by the United States; and, the use of a 15,000 pound bomb, the BLU 82, on Tang Island.

President Ford authorized the use of riot control agents at the first meeting of the NSC. They were authorized in an effort to recover the ship and crew. However, gas agents were used at least twice: the first time to stop a Thai vessel from reaching the Cambodian mainland with the crew of the Mayaguez on it. This operation was unsuccessful. Secondly, gas was used when the Marines

assaulted the Mayaguez during the combat assault. This operation was not needed as the ship was empty. The use of gas, though ineffective, did beg questions about the rationale for its use.

When asked about riot control agents and the possible violation to the Geneva Protocol that prohibited the use of gas, the Department of Defense offered the following:

"The United States has ratified the Geneva Protocol of 1925, but in our view that Protocol does not extend to the use of riot control agents.

In ratifying the Geneva Protocol, the President announced that the United States would, as a matter of national policy, renounce the first use in war of riot control agents except their use, upon approval of the President, in defensive military modes to save lives, such as their use in rescue missions in remotely isolated areas.

The use of riot control agents in the Mayaguez incident was specifically authorized by the President, and was deemed necessary to facilitate the rescue of the Mayaguez crew in an area which at that moment was remotely isolated from U.S. forces. Accordingly, the action was consistent with U.S. policy in the use in war of riot control agents." (58)

The use of BLU 82, commonly called the "Daisy Cutter", was also questioned. The bomb, the largest non-nuclear bomb in the U.S. arsenal, was developed during the Vietnam conflict for blasting out landing zones from thick jungle. During the Mayaguez incident, it was dropped on Tang Island as the last of the Marines were evacuating the island after the assault. Purportedly, it was dropped to eliminate enemy weapons fire that could not be suppressed by other means.

Three BLU 82 bombs were available and ready for use during the Marine assault. A decision by the Marine Task Group Commander before the assault allowed that the BLU 82 would not be used unless its use was specifically requested by the on-the-ground assault commander. He never requested its use. He was not informed that a decision had been made to drop the bomb nor had he requested its use at any time. An inquiry into the Mayaguez incident determined that "the decision to use the weapon was probably made in Washington" [59]. The use of this extremely lethal weapon against Cambodian forces cannot be justified for military reasons.

In all, the use of riot control agents and the BLU 82 bomb served no useful purpose except to further support the perception of chaos and its consequences.

INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence was faulty. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) provided widely varying and contradictory analysis. The military operation called for marines to assault Tang Island. One thousand marines had been placed in Thailand as a "ready reserve" for that purpose. One hundred and seventy-five were thought to be sufficient. This number was deemed an acceptable risk. It was also in accordance with marine doctrine which calls for an initial three to one superiority over enemy troops. Coincidentally, the number was also the approximate number of troops that could be carried by the maximum available helicopters.

The number of enemy forces on Tang Island was based on an initial CIA estimates that placed the enemy strength at about 20 irregulars and their families [60]. DIA, however, estimated the enemy strength to be as high as 200 Khmer Rouge soldiers armed with automatic weapons, mortars, and recoilless rifles [61]. This latter estimate proved to be

very accurate---but it was not believed. The reasons for the significant discrepancy between estimates are not contained in unclassified sources; however, they can be assumed: responsibility was credited to DIA for the inaccurate estimates of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces during the recently concluded Vietnam War; therefore, there may have been a reluctance to believe DIA again.

The Marine Ground Commander later reported the estimated enemy strength at about "150 professional soldiers, well-equipped with small arms, machine guns, recoilless rifles, and mortars" [62]. For reasons unknown, the earlier DIA estimate was not made known to him. This ratio of marines (175) to enemy forces (150) was not in accordance with corps doctrine, but because of the nature of the operation and the expectation of initial surprise, it constituted an acceptable risk.

During the combat assault the marines discovered that the Mayaguez crew actually were never on Tang Island. The crew had been taken from the ship when it was seized, to the mainland and subsequently to Rong Island, some 30 miles from the action---almost 24 hours earlier [63]. This information should have been known, but because of faulty intelligence, it was not. Air reconnaissance was available but its effectiveness was diminished because of the dense

vegetation on Tang Island. Photos of the island were taken, but they too proved to be of little value.

Intelligence sufficient to conduct an assault on Tang Island was limited. All available Cambodian refugees in the Utapao Air Base area were located and queried about the island. One former Cambodian naval officer, who said he had been on the island some time before the crisis, alleged that there would probably be no more than twenty to thirty people on the island with no organized regular units there [64]. The fact there were no tactical maps available compounded the problem [65]. Given the high U.S. presence in Southeast Asia, particularly in nearby Vietnam, the lack of maps of the general area as almost implausible.

One U.S. Air Force RF-4 aircraft was allowed to fly 16 reconnaissance flights over Tang Island to take pictures; however, it was limited to above 6,000 feet because of possible hostile fire. A total of 5000 to 6,000 pictures were taken. Significantly, of 1,000 pictures taken at about the time the fishing boat reached Kompong Som near the Cambodian mainland,, several showed a "fishing boat with approximately 29 possible people on deck." This same boat had "probable boxes" and drums or barrels in front of the pilot house. The boat from which the crew was eventually recovered also, had drums or barrels in front of the pilot house. The crew later confirmed that they had been taken to

Kompong Som harbor by a Thai fishing boat [66]. Had the photo analyst been instructed to look for possible caucasians, the crew may have been spotted on the fishing boat and the attack on Tang Island avoided. This observation was made in the Comptroller General's report after the crisis and after examining the film taken [67].

A U.S. Air Force drone is an unmanned aircraft equipped with high resolution cameras. It was not used for intelligence gathering, though it was available. Specially equipped to take photographs at low altitudes in a hostile environment, the use of the drone was rejected because: at least 24 hours are required to make it operational; the air space was already saturated with other aircraft; and, the drone's flight route must be preprogrammed and works best against stationary targets [68].

The intelligence passed to the President and the NSC was equally poor. As the various intelligence agencies attempted to acquire the most current and accurate information, information was often passed before it could be verified and authenticated. Some critical, and as it turned out, accurate, intelligence about the number and capabilities of the forces on Tang Island never reached the assault force. It differed with other official intelligence sources. This led to contradictory intelligence recommendations. As a consequence, poor decisions resulted.

In his book, Leaders and Intelligence, Dr. Michael Handel states, "The first major difference (between highest political strategic level and those on the operational or lower level) is that decisions and intelligence estimates at the highest political and strategic level are seldom produced under pressure of time because they are mainly concerned with long-range trends" [69]. This statement is certainly true with regard to planned operations and to the probabilistic range of expectant behavior. However, a danger arises when a senior political leader, such as the President, becomes directly involved in tactical decisions. Dr. Handel agrees that because of the very nature of crisis management, when a political leader becomes intimately involved in operational details, he can be inclined to make decisions based on operational intelligence and loose sight of strategic objectives. Clausewitz comments:

In (tactics), one is carried away by the pressures of the moment, caught up in a maelstrom when resistance would be fatal, and, suppressing incipient scruples, one presses boldly on. In strategy, the pace is much slower. There is room for apprehensions, one's own and those of others; for objections and remonstrations and, in consequence, for premature regrets [70].

Operational or tactical intelligence, because of its perishable nature, requires a quick, decisive determination for its use. Usually, the political leader is in the worst position to use it effectively. There is a military perception that politicians should not involve themselves in the operational details. Churchill, the First Lord of the

Admiralty and "meddling civilian" was, after all, sacrificed after the disastrous Dardanelles campaign of 1915. He had thrust the campaign upon a "somewhat uneager staff" [71]

RESULTS

The success of the rescue operation can be debated. Although the captain and the 39 crewmen were returned and the ship recovered, an equal number of American marines were killed and a greater number were wounded during the operation. President Ford and the military were praised for the decisive and deliberate action to rescue the ship and crew. However, if the goal of the exercise was to improve U.S. morale, then the exercise was indeed successful. In a Gallup Opinion Poll, conducted June, 1975, President Ford's popularity improved from 39% before the Mayaguez incident to 51% after [72]. Decision Research Corporation directly addressed Ford's handling of the Mayaguez affair. The poll showed that 75% approved. "The success generated a moral uplift for the American people, restored a belief in American credibility, and demonstrated a strategic resolve worthy of a great power"[73].

Indirect affects were also in evidence. They, too, reflect an apparent success. Capitalizing on the success of the rescue, President Ford made his first visit to Europe as

President of the United States three weeks after the crisis. The visit included a summit with NATO heads of government, talks on the Middle East with Egyptian President Sadat, and meetings with the governments of Spain and Italy:

"Mr. Ford's travels come at a pregnant time. He leaves an America somewhat doubtful about its world role as it absorbs the sudden, final collapse in Indochina. He faces a Western Europe hungry for reassurance, but again somewhat doubtful of America's present will and capacity to back up that reassurance." [74]

In response to a question about the value of his handling of the Mayaguez incident in reassuring Europe of America's resolve, President Ford said,

"I am sure that both domestically in the United States, as well as worldwide, the handling of the Mayaguez incident should be a firm assurance that the United States is capable and has the will to act in emergencies, in challenges. I think this is a clear, clear indication that we are not only strong but we have the will and the capability of moving." [75]

Other indirect repercussions included a defeat in the House of Representatives of an amendment that would have forced withdrawal of 70,000 U.S. military personnel on a worldwide basis. Senator Mike Mansfield publicly stated that [because of the Mayaguez incident] he was reassessing his position regarding support for the troop withdrawal and wondered if it was not the time to perhaps keep America's strength overseas. This position was echoed by Congressman O'Neill of Massachusetts [76].

Internationally, the retaking of the Mayaguez caused few repercussions except within the Communist community.

Deputy Premier Teng Hsiao-ping, Chief of Staff of China's Armed Forces is quoted as saying even before the U.S. action, "If the U.S. intervenes, there is nothing we can do" [77]. Pravda, the official Communist news agency, stated that the American ship seizure was well within international waters [78]. This implied that the U.S. actions were justified. However, the Thai government formally protested the use of its territory by the U.S. forces. An American embassy official in Thailand remarked, "It was a ham-handed operation. It would seem that no one in Washington gave any thought to the Thai feelings" [79]. Regardless, the event did not appear to have any lasting negative effect.

If, on the other hand, the U.S. action was to serve notice to the rest of the world that the U.S. would and could respond to protect its interests, the success may not be as obvious. As a Thai official put it: "The Americans have shown that they will respond when an American ship is in trouble. That is hardly any comfort to us because we are an independent nation, not an American ship" [80].

The decision-making process has also been called into question. The President was criticized by members of Congress for his handling of the crisis. Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, the Senate Democratic whip, voiced the concern of some members of Congress over what he characterized as "the failure to ask at least some of the

leaders to participate in the decision-making process" [81]. Others may wonder why the President would be so intimately involved in the tactical planning and decision making process.

SUMMARY AND APPLICATIONS

In relating the decisions and the actions taken by the U.S. government in the Mayaguez crisis to the unique national and international environment and the Theory of Chaos, there is ample evidence to suggest that a relationship exists. But, before too much is drawn from this conclusion, it is important to note that Chaos Theory relies on the environment of the time, not the crisis itself, to function. Unlike other models, Chaos Theory does not depend on blocs, capabilities or special relationships among nations to explain actions. Nor does it differentiate between large and small nations. The satisfying aspect is that it allows anticipation or prediction.

With regard to the unique case of the Mayaguez, the unique environment in which it was set lends its consequences to support Chaos Theory.

The complex and highly unusual national and international setting in the mid-70's that presented an political climate in the U.S. of uncertainty;

the technological capabilities that allowed the President to actively monitor the on-going combat operations and thereby encouraged a centralized decision making;

the lack of reliable intelligence which encouraged decision makers to believe the intelligence that best supported the desired course of action and ignore intelligence to the contrary;

the President's cursory acknowledgment and token adherence to the War Powers Resolution that minimized Congressional input into the decision making process;

the bombing of the Cambodian mainland that begged questions of necessity and real purpose and violated the unwritten code of proportionality;

the early authorization by the President on use of riot agents;

the "Washington decision" to drop the BLU 82, the largest non nuclear bomb in the U.S. arsenal; and,

the apparent desire by Washington to "punish" the Cambodians

The reactions by the U.S. suggests a behavior that goes beyond that expected of a rational and politically mature nation. They went beyond the "range of expectant behavior"

that had been in evidence prior to the incident. The reaction, particularly with regard to the dropping of the BLU 82, was not proportional to the situation. In fact the reaction is bias toward political chaos; a reaction, given the environment of the time, that Chaos Theory predicts in such circumstances.

The events of May 1975, widened the "range of expectant behavior" for the United States. Figure 5 reflects this change. No longer would a military reaction by the U.S. to a world event be totally unexpected. A degree of uncertainty has been introduced for the future. Indeed, a U.S. precedence had been set. The later excursion into Grenada, the raid into Libya, and the invasion of Panama serve to highlight the fact that once a precedence has been set, similar actions are more apt to happen. Neither the world nor the U.S. Congress reacted as violently or as surprised to these events as they did to the violent and destructive U.S. response to the Mayaguez crisis.

Relative Change in Range of Expectant Behavior

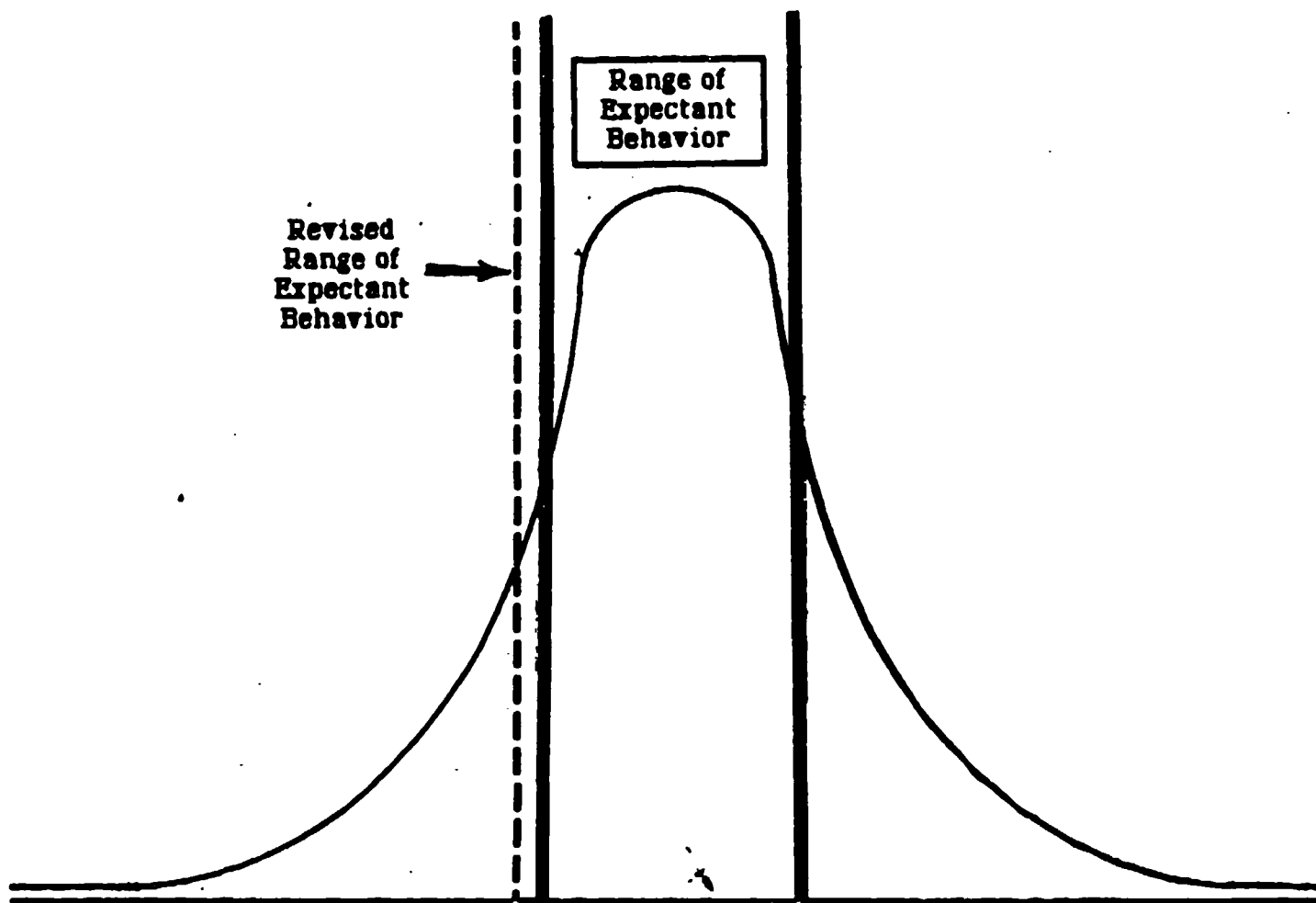


Figure 5

The U.S. reaction to the seizure of the Mayaguez can be explained in many ways. This paper suggests that the application of the Theory of Chaos is one way. Other theories can also serve to explain the events. In hindsight, they like Chaos Theory, are as accurate. Their shortcoming then, is that, unlike Chaos Theory, they do not pretend to predict.

Figure 6 depicts model of crisis management. Within the time a crisis develops and until the time action is taken, certain factors become important. Ideally, such factors as intelligence, forces, weather, etc., reach maturity at the time a course of action is initiated. Because crisis' are usually time-sensitive, simultaneous maturity for all elements may not be possible. Immaturity of any element, such as inadequate intelligence or lack of a sufficient resources, or helicopters in the case of the Mayaguez rescue, create risk. This risk must be judged by the decision maker, and with proper counsel, determined to be acceptable or unacceptable. Like Chaos Theory or the 'loss of a nail' metaphor, a single, seemingly insignificant factor, can foretell doom. Conversely, a positive result is just "plain dumb luck". The driving forces in crisis management then, are like the three-dimensional situation or stool in Figure 7. These dimensions, time, threat, and

Figure 6
Model of Crisis Management

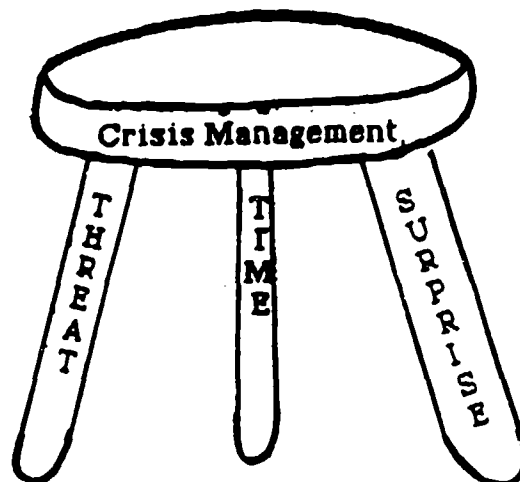
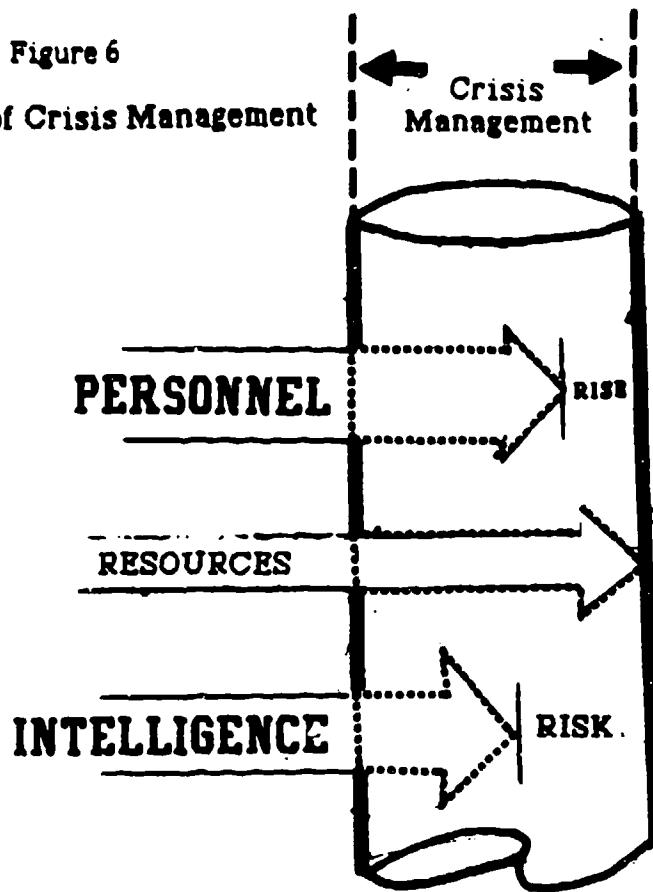


Figure 7

Driving Forces in Crisis Management

This drawing is a visual representation of the properties Charles F. Hermann associates with crisis management in "International Crisis as a Situational Variable", International Politics and Foreign Policy, edited by James N. Rosenau, New York, The Free Press, 1969, page 415.

surprise, relate to eight classifications described by Charles F. Hermann [82]. All relate to varying differences in the three variables. The situation that most closely approximates the Mayaguez incident is the "circumstantial situation"---low threat to national interests, short time for reaction, and surprise. However, like the conclusion that can be deduced from the Mayaguez facts, Hermann considers the circumstantial situation not to be a justified crisis[83].

If there is value in relating the response taken by the U.S. Government to Chaos Theory, then the benefits for the future are significant. Inherent in the theory is its universality. Chaotic changes like those on-going through the disintegration of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, may be cause for alarm for Soviets, former communist bloc countries and the rest of the world.

The recent clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the Soviet Union's southern republic of Azerbaijan are another problem that contributes to a extraordinary situation for the Soviet Union. It is but one more factor that contributes to the possibility of a chaotic reaction by the Soviets. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said of the conflict that the Kremlin currently is using more force than needed to quell the clashes [84]. Political rhetoric or prophecy? If it is reality, then does the

action by the Soviet Union betrays logic and exceed the range of expectant behavior? Any action taken by the Soviets could produce an increase in world tension. The catalyst to cause a chaotic response could be small in the eyes of the world, but perceived as justification of significant action by the Soviets. The dramatically changing events in eastern Europe and those clashes between various factions within the Soviet Union are happening too rapidly to ignore from a Chaos Theory point of view.

History is replete with cases where political motivation caused an otherwise unimportant event to become a crisis. The North Korean invasion of South Korea on June 24, 1950 may be such an example. It may also be an example where chaos politics affected the judgment of decision makers. Hermann characterizes the North Korean attack on his situational cube as a true crisis situation---high threat, short time, and surprise [85]. This conclusion is shared by a majority of historians; however this conclusion may not be complete.

The chaotic nature of the international events that existed prior to the North Korean attack were not unlike the chaos evident during the Mayaguez incident twenty-five years later. The Cold War was worsening; the Russians recently developed their own atomic bomb; the effects of a deep recession were still lingering in the U.S. President

Truman's popularity was at an all time low of 37 per cent; and the Administration had been denounced by the press for "losing" mainland China to the Communists [86]. Also, critical Senate and House elections were at risk in the up-coming November elections. Though not directly related to each other, these events, nevertheless, presented a chaotic environment.

Significantly, in 1948, President Truman had agreed with a top secret chiefs of staff paper provided that South Korea was not vital to U.S. interests. He reaffirmed this position in June of 1950 that Korea "is of little strategic value to the United States and that commitment to United States use of military forces in Korea would be ill-advised" [87]. Still, President Truman made decisions as a result of the North Korean invasion that led to the U.S. involvement in the Korean War. The implication is that because world and national events were chaotic, invasion of a country twice rejected to be of strategic value to the U.S. produced a chaotic response from the U.S.

Responses to a chaotic situation that has been exasperated by a surprising event, are most dangerous when the situation is considered a crisis. Even when an event does not qualify as a crisis, as in Hermann's criteria, decision-makers may make it so. When the amount of time available is linked to an event that demands action or to

the existence of an unique and unacceptable situation, the possibility of a chaotic response increases.

CONCLUSION

The application of the Theory of Chaos to political science has a potential worthy of study. Given its current theoretical application lacks an exact mathematical measurement that classical sciences enjoy; however, the basic theory does hold promise.

Does Chaos Theory suggest a better method of dealing with political chaos? Perhaps. Instead of formulating detailed contingency plans for as many scenarios as possible, it appears to be better to gather a crisis management team or cell of experts to handle all unforeseen crisis. The routine management of crisis could produce better and less reactionary responses. With some logic it would be possible to develop a crisis template or computer model as a tool to better manage crisis situations. This approach is not unlike the approach suggested by Neustadt and May in their book, Thinking in Time (88). They propose to "disassemble" a crisis situation into Known, Presumed, and Unclear and write down what is known about each. Writing these makes it harder to "deceive yourself---or

anybody else." Both the Neustadt and May approach and the formulation of a crisis management team attempt to reduce a crisis management analysis to an objective evaluation. If this is done chances increase for a rational decision. And, unless external factors preclude handling of the situation by the team, such as President Ford's active involvement in the Mayaguez crisis, then management will not be by exception, but become more routine. Even if some high authority does take direct control, at least the means to acquire information and intelligence and the means to disseminate instructions is firmly in place. As more thought is given to the association between Chaos Theory and disproportionate responses to non-threatening events, other alternatives will undoubtedly surface.

The word Mayaguez means "a place of many streams". In this regard, its namesake, the Mayaguez has become a part of political history because of those four days in May. Its significance as a ship is the same as before. However, its significance to political science has been increased by its association to Chaos Theory. The actions that transpired during May, 1975, like its name implies, the Mayaguez became and remains, "a place of many interests". The actions taken by the United States as a result of the seizure introduced a wider "range of expectant behavior" to U.S. alternatives. The concept of Chaos Theory helps to explain, but not

justify unusual actions. There is no doubt that the theories of chaos may have application in political science.

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